CHARLES DICKENS
MASTER OF CHRISTMAS REVELS

By HAMILTON W. MABIE
Author and Editor

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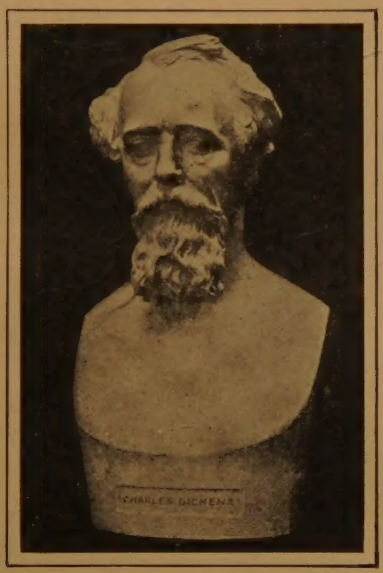


Bust by Thomas Woolner

MENTOR GRAVURES

SYDNEY CARTON
THE TWO WELLERS
MR. PICKWICK
MR. PECKSNIFF
MR. MICAWBER
BILL SIKES

CHARLES DICKENS was the prophet of the under dog, the advocate of the waif, the neglected schoolboy, the half-starving and half-clothed men and women carried under by misfortune or weakness. He knew the slums, the workhouse, and the prison by heart: he had not only seen them, but he had felt them. If he had not been a man of tremendous vitality, he would have been a cynic and borne a grudge against the world; if he had not been saved by humor, he would have been one of those reformers who see only one thing to be done and are ready to do it at the expense of everything else. He became a powerful novelist because he saw misery in perspective, and because he had both humor, which is a kind of sanity, and the dramatic sense, which humanizes the hardest conditions. He became one of the effective reformers of his time because he was first and foremost an artist, and let the human facts tell the story instead of using them as a text for moralizing.

Because he was an artist he worked in his own way, and was in himself a relief society.

The "Christmas Books" are not the recreations of a writer of long stories: they are the very heart of his work. The world is right in making him, in a special way, the dramatist of the Christmas spirit. The most popular Christmas classic in prose English is from his hand, and more than any

other man among English-speaking peoples he has made the Christmas spirit real and contagious. In a short preface to the "Christmas Stories" he said that he had not attempted to work out character with any elaboration, but that his purpose was "in a whimsical kind of masque which the good humour of the season justified, to awaken some loving and forbearing thoughts, never out of season in a Christian land." Those loving and forbearing thoughts are summed by Tiny Tim, "God bless Us, Every One!"

BIRTHPLACE OF DICKENS
Near Portsmouth, England

Dickens organized no Christmas Cheer Societies; but he gave the Christmas feeling an impetus which has started numberless societies. When Thomas Carlyle raised his powerful voice against the inhuman conditions in which women and children were working in England he was denounced as a dangerous agitator by people who did not see in his words the beginning of a far-reaching movement for the betterment of human conditions in industry. He spoke out of a heart stirred by sympathy and indignation, and was one of the forerunners of many whose consciences were aroused by the brutalizing influences which surrounded hosts of working people. Today that feeling is shared by so many that the protest has been organized into powerful societies and even into political parties; but it would be not only ungrateful but stupid, in this day of united action, to undervalue the service of those who led the way, by individual effort, to a better order of things.

A TEACHER OF KIND-HEARTEDNESS

This, however, is the attitude of many people toward Charles Dickens and the spirit which inspired much of his work. He was an eloquent and moving teacher of individual kind-heartedness, and in this day of systematic helpfulness and organized benevolence the kindly spirits whom Dickens invoked are often spoken of with the patronizing air which experts often assume toward the amateur. It must be confessed that the cheerful company of kind-hearted people who came out of Dickens' imagination were amateurs in benevolence, and that method is quite as important

in the distribution of help as in the conduct of business; nevertheless, it remains true that as the best business organization without a strong brain behind it is headed for bankruptcy, so organized charity without the warm heart behind it is mere machinery, set to do work which demands deep and tender human feeling.

CHARLES DICKENS
Showing him as a young man

Dickens is undoubtedly old-fashioned. To some people to be mid-Victorian is to be as hopelessly antiquated as an oldtime haircloth sofa; and Dickens was one of the greatest of the mid-Victorians. We do our good deeds in a corner; they did theirs in broad daylight. We send checks to societies; they gave money themselves. We distrust and conceal our emotions; they were brazen in showing their feelings. We keep Christmas circumspectly and chiefly with our children; they kept it with unblushing hilarity of good will. If they lacked reticence, we lack courage of our emotions. Dickens was often too emotional, and one of the most grievous charges made against him was and is that he is sentimental. When one opens "Dombey and Son" or "Old Curiosity Shop" at certain pages, he cannot escape the conviction that the charge is sustained. Dickens is sentimental; but he is many things besides, and his work at heart is thoroughly sound.

MRS. CHARLES DICKENS
From a painting about 1848, by Daniel Maclise

At Christmas the people are few who do not remember the under dog. Many writers describe conditions vividly and truthfully by the use of the imagination. Dickens used all the resources of the imagination; but he knew at first hand the experiences of privation and hardship he described. With one locality in London his associations were so painful that in later years he could not bring himself to go near the place. In the most sensitive years he was spared no humiliation. Writing of himself at this period he said, "But for the mercy of God, I might easily have become, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or

DICKENS READING "THE CHIMES" TO HIS FRIENDS—From the drawing by Daniel Maclise

a little vagabond." He became instead the most graphic reporter of the life of the very poor.

EARLY YEARS

His education for his work began when he was a "very queer small boy," with a gift for amusing himself and other people. From the beginning he was an actor: when his father set him on a table with an audience about him he sang popular songs with immense gusto and precocious cleverness. In a recent French monograph the authors very shrewdly characterize one aspect of his character, "Dickens was destined to remain throughout his life more or less in the condition of a child toward the end of an evening in which it has had a party; in other words, agreeable, joyous, delighted, but strongly overexcited and secretly almost on the point of tears." Perhaps a man who has worked in the slums and spent his evenings with his family in jail, and later becomes the idol of half the world, never quite gains perfect poise.

Dickens always spoke of himself as a Kentish man,—and Kent is one of the loveliest of English counties,—but he was taken to London when he was two years old, and two years later he went to Chatham, where he spent five years of his early childhood, and was surrounded by "soldiers, sailors, Jews, chalk, shrimps, officers, and dockyard men." His mother taught him to read, and he was sent, still later, to a day school. He had the good fortune to be taken early to the theater, and began at once to sing and declaim. He read books of travel, the Arabian Nights, Fielding, Smollett, Cervantes, and the English essayists, and began to write. He said of himself later that he was "a writer when a mere baby, an actor always."

In his tenth year he was taken back to London, and lived in a very

shabby house in a shabby neighborhood. His father was an honorable man, much given to fine sentiments, but hopelessly incompetent as a support to his family. The family circumstances changed from bad to worse. The elder Dickens went to jail for debt, and the boy spent his Sundays in the Marshalsea, the jail so vividly described in "Little Dorrit," his days pasting labels on blacking pots, and his nights in a back attic, in which afterward lodged Bob Sawyer.

A fortunate change of conditions took Dickens out of the blacking factory and sent him to school, where he fell under the power of an ignorant and tyrannical head master, but laid up a store of experiences for future use. In a merciless way life was giving him the most effective education for his work. He did not wholly miss the fun of school life; for he found eager readers for the short stories he began to write, and he organized and directed private theatricals.

After two or three years the boy was again thrown on his own resources, and found a position as clerk in a solicitor's office. The pay was small; but the work gave him a knowledge of lawyers, legal procedure, and courts that equipped him with material for novel writing and reform when he had the attention of the world.

THE REPORTER

The vigor of his mind and will was shown in his study of shorthand and his devotion to reading. At nineteen, after various efforts to gain access to the stage, Dickens became a parliamentary reporter, and three years later joined the staff of a leading London newspaper. After many vicissitudes and real hardship fortune suddenly opened the door to success for him. He was only twenty-two, he knew life at first hand, he had immense energy and appetite for work; he was, in a word, a fortunate youth.

DICKENS THE ACTOR

As he appeared in the character of Captain Bobadil in the play by Ben Jonson, "Every Man in His Humour." From the painting by C. R. Leslie

As a reporter he had all kinds of

adventures of the mind and many of the body, and all the time he was getting material for his lifework. That work had already begun. He had dropped into the letterbox of a magazine the sketch entitled "Mr. Minns and His Cousin," which was later reprinted in "Sketches by Boz." The exuberant fun of the sketch attracted readers, and within two years the Monthly Magazine printed ten contributions from the new writer who called himself "Boz," a name which he had invented in his boyhood.

The Sketches were transferred to an evening newspaper, which paid much better prices, and Dickens was at ease on a small but comfortable income. He was on the threshold of fame and fortune. In 1836 the "Sketches by Boz" were brought out in two volumes, with etchings by Cruikshank. In March of that year the first number of the "Pickwick Papers" appeared. After three or four months' instalments had been published the serial seemed suddenly to catch the attention of a host of readers, and its popularity soon made its author one of the widely known men in England. The "Pickwick Papers" were published in book form in 1837, and the tide of prosperity rose to a great height, and did not ebb during the life of the novelist. His success had the suddenness and brilliance of a fairy tale, and was sustained to the very end.

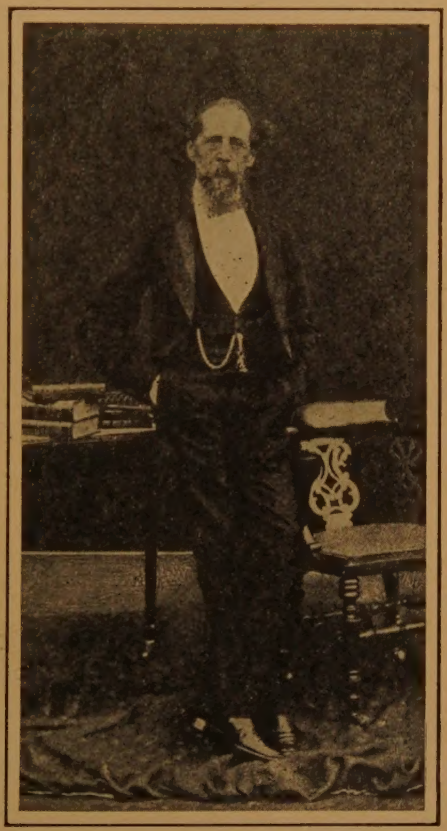
THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP IN LONDON

It was easy to explain: Dickens described, with the vividness of a realistic painter, everyday people doing everyday things in an everyday manner. His readers did not have to "grow up" to his characters: they were on a level with them. There was nothing "literary" in the professional sense about them: they were plain folk who could be seen at every tavern, in any "mean street," as one often sees them in the East End of London today. They were convivial, for the age was convivial; they were often boisterous in their fun, and they played low comedy and farce a good deal. They were, however, kindly folk, overflowing with humor, and they were sketched with a skill that was as full of life as the people

themselves. Dickens was to go far beyond the "Sketches by Boz" in knowledge of character, of life, and of art; but he set a great pace for himself at the very start.

FAME AND PROSPERITY

He started with a large capital in his keenness of observation, his vivid imagination, his humor, and his capacity for hard work; but he had to learn the business of writing. Even to a man of genius writing is an art which has to be mastered by practice. Dickens grew rapidly in the warm air of prosperity. It has often happened that very important books have grown out of very modest sketches. This was true of the "Pickwick Papers," which were projected originally to accompany certain comic sketches to be made by a well-known illustrator. Dickens modified the plan so as to secure freedom in selecting his subjects and to make the illustrations dependent on the text; but the whole scheme broadened in its scope under his hand. This was especially true of Mr. Pickwick, who, without ceasing to be laughable, became lovable as the experiences of life brought out his finer traits.



DICKENS THE LECTURER
From a photograph by Ernest Edwards, now published for the first time

The popular idea that a novelist makes a complete scheme of his story in advance and then fills in the details is true only of stories written for the market. In real novels the characters grow by the law of their own natures, and often escape from their creator and bring about events and catastrophes which he did not foresee. Imaginary men and women, as soon as they are vitalized, begin to live in their own way, and many a novelist who planned a happy ending for his story has found himself face to face with a tragedy which he neither foresaw nor desired. It was characteristic of Mr. Pickwick, projected as a broadly humorous character, that, after his two years' journey into a world of which he had never dreamed during his previous humdrum business career, he should drain a bumper to the sentiment "God bless you all!"

GADSHILL HOUSE, THE HOME OF CHARLES DICKENS

OLIVER TWIST

In the pleasant glow of this early success Dickens began his first long story, the "Adventures of Oliver Twist." It is significant of the bent of his interest that its central figure is a waif whose contact with the criminal world is reported with terrible realism, and culminates in a tragedy of almost unbearable brutality. In point of tragic energy and force there is nothing in fiction which surpasses the first of Dickens' longer novels; but the story is relieved by a humor which was not simply a matter of contrast and relaxation of tension, but vital and creative. The readers of the novel found themselves face to face with new types of humorous character. The defects of the novel are as obvious as its merits. It is sentimental in its love scenes, its style is sometimes stilted, and in places its construction is fatally weak; but in vividness, energy, and inventiveness it was a striking and even brilliant piece of work from so young a man.

LATER NOVELS

It was followed by a much more original and characteristic novel. In "Nicholas Nickleby" and "David Copperfield" the genius of Dickens is most clearly revealed. Both stories have a certain quality of tenderness which gives the reader the feeling that he is near the heart of the novelist; in both the humor is abundant, but stops short of boisterousness.

"David Copperfield" is one of the most perfect of English novels. It is sincere and unforced in style; its tenderness and its humor are free from exaggeration; it has a charming freshness of heart. The world has always read into it a note of autobiography, and both in background and in character Dickens was drawing upon his own experience. His heart was in the story, and it is the most beautiful and characteristic work that came from his hand. In any list of the foremost English novels it must find a place.

In the meantime he had written "Old Curiosity Shop" and "Barnaby Rudge," stories which appeal strongly to the sympathy but not to the judgment of critical readers. Little Nell is a poetic figure sketched with infinite tenderness; she has survived the extravagances of an impossible tale. "Dombey and Son," also written in the period between the "Pickwick Papers" and "David Copperfield," was immensely popular at the start, but has slipped silently into the background. The extravagance of its sentiment is very distasteful to a more reticent—perhaps one might say a more shamefaced—age like our own.

The publication of "David Copperfield" not only revealed Dickens' genius, both humorous and dramatic, in its most artistic expression, but was the precursor of stories full of original observation and striking character drawing. "Bleak House," "Great Expectations," "Little Dorrit," "Our Mutual Friend," the unfinished "Mystery of Edwin Drood," sustained a popularity which early reached a perilous height. In this country a cloud passed over that popularity after the appearance of the "American Notes" and the American episode in "Martin Chuzzlewit"; but the eclipse was never total and was of brief duration. The raw conditions described by Dickens were local; but they were real, and the novelist told the truth. The country was young and

DICKENS READING TO HIS DAUGHTERS
From a photograph taken about 1865

sensitive, and the truth needed a little larger setting than Dickens gave it. He was soon forgiven, and hardly a day passes in Congress in which Mr. Jefferson Brick is not heard.

"A Tale of Two Cities" holds a place by itself. It is an absorbingly interesting novel, by no means perfect in construction, but full of strong dramatic effects. No one but Dickens could have written it; but it is not a characteristic piece of work. It was written under the spell of Carlyle's "French Revolution," and is a kind of dramatization of that brilliant and dramatic history.

THE GRAVE OF DICKENS

The stone placed upon it is inscribed "Charles Dickens. Born February the seventh, 1812. Died June the ninth, 1870." This reproduction is from a painting by Sir Luke Fildes, R. A.

CHARLES DICKENS

From a photograph made about 1861

THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

Through all these stories there runs a stream of sympathy from which a mist of tenderness rises and lies over the whole landscape. The sentimentalism which is Dickens' chief defect is the excess and perversion of this noble quality. His spirit is luminous in the Christmas Books, and in them is found also some of his best work. The "Christmas Carol," by its happy combination of pathos, humor, and fantasy, has become not only a Christmas classic, but a textbook of the art of making kindliness of heart and good cheer contagious; but there are many who hold "The Chimes" in higher regard; while "The Cricket on the Hearth," in delicacy of feeling and quiet beauty, is an idyl of the home.

In many a friendly scene in celebration of good cheer and good rel-

lowship Dickens' spirit is the Master of the Revels and revives the old-fashioned Christmas merriment; but always with a thought for those who stand outside in the cold and look in at the windows. In the "Carol" and the "Chimes" he stands in the open door and holds high a light which streams into the darkness.

The faults of his work are obvious; but what amazing vitality it has! To add one figure to the group of men and women who live in the fiction of the world is an achievement which makes a man's name familiar to succeeding generations. Dickens has called into being a great community of men and women and children of the imagination so individual, so unlike one another, so real in look and dress and manner, that one feels as if their names ought to be in the directory.

THE EMPTY CHAIR, GADSHILL, JUNE 9, 1870
From a painting by Sir Luke Fildes, R. A.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

THE LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS *By John Forster.*
The Baker & Taylor Co., New York. In two vols.
A thoroughly interesting and authoritative work by an intimate friend of the novelist.

CHARLES DICKENS: A CRITICAL STUDY *By George Gissing.*

CHARLES DICKENS *By G. K. Chesterton.*

THE DICKENS COUNTRY *By F. G. Kitton.*

DICKENS AS A READER *By Charles Kent.*

MY FATHER AS I RECALL HIM *By M. Dickens.*

CHARLES DICKENS AND THE STAGE *By F. E. Pemberton.*

DICKENS'S LONDON *By F. Miltoun.*

CHARLES DICKENS AND HIS FRIENDS *By W. Teignmouth Shore.*

DICKENS'S CHILDREN *By Jessie Willcox Smith.*

CHARLES DICKENS

As he appeared during his last reading—"The Christmas Carol"—at St. James Hall, London, on March 15, 1870

With all his literary gifts, Dickens was not a bookish man—that is in an academic sense. He was a man of the people—a common man. His dress was gaudy, his manners pronounced. His character was full of contrasts and his personality most picturesque. In our busy days of journalism he would have made rare good copy for the newspaper men. But the common quality that many detected in him made him all the more akin to the world of plain, workaday folks, and under it beat a heart that was kind and glowing with good fellowship. He had always a "good day" for the humblest that he met, and his hand was ever out in generosity toward the needy. The novels that came from his pen are, taken together, the gospel of the writer himself, in their sympathetic heart beat and unfailing good spirits, in their range and richness of humor, in their relentless exposure of shams, in their stern arraignment of evil in all forms, and in their simple reverence for sacred things.

★ ★ ★

And the very man he was, he remained throughout his life, unspoiled by the rapidity and the fullness of his success. He was born in 1812 in poverty, and his early boyhood was a period of privation and suffering. At ten years of age he was a menial in a blacking factory, at fifteen a lawyer's clerk in London. Four years later he became a stenographic reporter in Parliament, and then, in 1836, at the age of twenty-four, he published "Sketches by Boz" and the first numbers of "Pickwick." Immediately his reputation spread like a flame, and when, in the following year, at the age of twenty-five, he published "Oliver Twist," his name became known wherever the English language was read and spoken. From that time on until his death in 1870 his life was a growing success, and his pathway was strewn with enthusiastic tributes. If, therefore, he betrayed some self-consciousness and egotism, it is only natural. The walls of his house, we are told, were covered with pictures illustrating his writings. His conversation was filled with references to the characters in his novels. "Remember that for my biography," he would say to his friend Forster whenever he did anything that attracted attention. Surely this is not to be wondered at. Rather do we wonder that he remained so kind and sincere a brother and companion of his fellow men.

★ ★ ★

His manner and appearance were apparently as full of contrasts as his character. Accounts of him differ essentially. Thomas Carlyle, writing to Froude in 1840, gives a graphic and vital impression of him: "He is a fine fellow—Boz, I think. Clear blue, intelligent eyes, eyebrows that he arches amazingly, large, protrusive, rather loose mouth, a face of most extreme *mobility*, which he shuttles about—eyebrows, eyes, mouth and all—in a very singular manner while speaking. Surmount this with a loose coil of common-colored hair, and set it on a small, compact figure, dressed à la d'Orsay (foppish) rather than well—this is Pickwick. For the rest, a quiet, shrewd looking fellow, who seems to guess pretty well what he is and what others are."

SYDNEY CARTON. BY FREDERICK BARNARD

SYDNEY CARTON, a true friend, and the real hero of "A Tale of Two Cities," from the drawing by Frederick Barnard, is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Charles Dickens."

SYDNEY CARTON

Monograph Number One in The Mentor Reading Course

GREATER love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And Sydney Carton, poor, dissipated, reckless drudge for the lawyer Stryver, proved himself a real man at last by sacrificing himself for the husband of the woman he loved.

Charles Saint-Évremond, called Charles Darnay, an aristocrat of France, was lying at the time of the French Revolution in the prison of the Conciergerie in Paris under sentence of death. His beautiful wife Lucie was in despair. There was no escape from the fury of the Paris mob.

But Sydney Carton, whose good abilities had been strangled by his dissipated life, closely resembled Darney; and Sydney Carton hopelessly loved Lucie. With the assistance of the jailer he was admitted to Darney's cell and took his place after drugging the prisoner. Darnay was released, and Carton awaited the coming of the executioners. Finally his time arrived, and he rode in the tumbrel to the guillotine. No one discovered the substitution but a poor little seamstress who had been caught in the toils of the Revolution, and it was his bravery that gave her courage to die nobly.

Dickens describes the last scene in the life of this man,—one of the few noble moments of his entire career,—a sacrifice inspired by beautiful love,—as follows:

"They said of him, about the city that night, that it was the peacefullest man's face ever beheld there. Many added that he looked sublime and prophetic.

"One of the most remarkable sufferers by the same axe—a woman—had asked at the foot of the same scaffold, not long before, to be allowed to write down the thoughts that were inspiring her. If he had given any utterance to his, and they were prophetic, they would have been these:

"'I see Barsad, and Cly, Defarge, The Vengeance, the Juryman, the Judge, long ranks of the new oppressors who have risen on the destruction of the old, perishing by this retributive instrument, before it shall cease out of its present use. I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long, long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time, of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself, and wearing out.

"'I see the lives for which I lay down my life, peaceful, useful, prosperous, and happy, in that England which I shall see no more. I see her with a child upon her bosom, who bears my name. I see her father, aged and bent, but otherwise restored, and faithful to all men in his healing office, and at peace. I see the good old man, so long their friend, in ten years' time enriching them with all he has, and passing tranquilly to his reward.

"'I see that I hold a sanctuary in their hearts, and in the hearts of their descendants, generations hence. I see her, an old woman, weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see her and her husband, their course done, lying side by side in their last earthly bed, and I know that each was not more honoured and held sacred in the other's soul than I was in the souls of both.

"'I see that child, who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning his way up in that path of life which once was mine. I see him winning it so well, that my name is made illustrious there by the light of his. I see the blots I threw upon it faded away. I see him foremost of just judges and honoured men, bringing a boy of my name with a forehead that I knew, and golden hair, to this place—then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement—and I hear him tell the child my story with a tender and a faltering voice.

"'It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.'"

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THE TWO WELLERS, BY FREDERICK BARNARD

THE TWO WELLERS, two of the humorous characters in "Pickwick Papers," from the drawing by Frederick Barnard, are the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Charles Dickens."

TONY AND SAMUEL WELLER

Monograph Number Two in The Mentor Reading Course

SAM WELLER was Mr. Pickwick's valet. Tony Weller was Sam Weller's father.

Tony Weller was one of the old, mottled-faced, great-coated, many waistcoated stage coachmen that flourished in England before the advent of railways.

Sam Weller was a compound of wit, simplicity, quaint humor, and fidelity,—an embodiment of London low life in its most agreeable and entertaining form. Mr. Pickwick first met him at a tavern where he went with a certain Mr. Wardle in search of the latter gentleman's sister, who had eloped with a fraud by the name of Alfred Jingle. They came upon Sam Weller busily employed in brushing a pair of boots, and "habited in a coarse striped waistcoat, with black calico sleeves and blue glass buttons; drab breeches and leggings. A bright red handkerchief was wound in a very loose and unstudied style round his neck, and an old white hat was thrown carelessly on one side of his head. There were two rows of boots before him; one cleaned, and the other dirty; and, at every addition he made to the clean row, he stopped in his work, and contemplated its results with evident satisfaction."

Samuel and his father had many remarkable humorous passages together. At one time Sam was trying to send a valentine to the lady of his heart. Not being a fluent and easy writer, he was having great difficulty. He decided to consult his father in regard to the finished epistle; so he read him the letter. He got as far as the line, "I feel myself ashamed and completely circumscribed in a dressin' of you, for you *are* a nice gal, and nothin' but it," when Mr. Weller burst in with a remark:

"That's a wery pretty sentiment."

"Yes, I think it is rayther good," observed Sam, highly flattered.

"Wot I like in that 'ere style of writin'," said the elder Mr. Weller, "is, that there ain't no callin' names in it,—no Wenuses, nor nothin' o' that kind. Wot's the good o' callin' a young 'ooman a Wenus or a angel, Sammy?"

"Ah! what, indeed?" replied Sam.

"You might jist as vell call her a griffin, or a unicorn, or a king's arms at once, which is wery well known to be a col-lection o' fabulous animals," added Mr. Weller.

"Just as well," replied Sam.

"Drive on, Sammy," said Mr. Weller.

Sam complied with the request, and proceeded as follows; his father continuing to smoke with a mixed expression of wisdom and complacency which was particularly edifying.

"'Afore I see you, I thought all women was alike.'"

"So they are," observed the elder Mr. Weller parenthetically.

"'But now,' continued Sam,—"'now I find what a reg'lar soft-headed, inkred'-lous turnip I must ha' been; for there ain't nobody like you, though I like you better than nothin' at all.' I thought it best to make that rayther strong," said Sam, looking up.

Mr. Weller nodded approvingly, and Sam resumed:

"'So I take the privilidge of the day, Mary, my dear,—as the gen'lem'n in difficulties did, ven he valked out of a Sunday,—to tell you that the first and only time I see you your likeness was took on my hart in much quicker time and brighter colors than ever a likeness was taken by the profeel macheen (wich p'r'aps you may have heerd on Mary my dear) altho it *does* finish a portrait and put the frame and glass on complete with a hook at the end to hang it up by and all in two minutes and a quarter.'"

Sam's father thought that this verged on the poetical; but the lover thought otherwise, and they let it go through. He had some difficulty in deciding what to sign this letter, but finally managed to get it off in the mail.

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MR. PICKWICK, BY FREDERICK BARNARD

MR. SAMUEL PICKWICK, founder and organizer of the famous Pickwick Club, and leading figure in "Pickwick Papers," from the drawing by Frederick Barnard, is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Charles Dickens."

MR. PICKWICK

Monograph Number Three in The Mentor Reading Course

AT a meeting of the Pickwick Club in London four members of the club were constituted a corresponding society, who were to travel, observe, and report on their observations to the club. On their travels they met with all sorts of adventures, which are told of in "Pickwick Papers."

Mr. Pickwick unfortunately became involved in a lawsuit with his landlady, who sued him for breach of promise. This is the way that he happened to give her cause for suit: He determined to engage a valet, and desiring to consult Mrs. Bardell, the landlady, in relation to the matter, he sent for her.

"'Mrs. Bardell,' said Mr. Pickwick. . . .

"'Sir,' said Mrs. Bardell. . . .

"'Do you think it's a much greater expense to keep two people than to keep one?'

"'La, Mr. Pickwick!' said Mrs. Bardell, coloring up to the very border of her cap, as she fancied she observed a species of matrimonial twinkle in the eyes of her lodger,—'la, Mr. Pickwick, what a question!'

"'Well, but do you?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"'That depends,' said Mrs. Bardell, that depends a good deal upon the person, you know, Mr. Pickwick; and whether it's a saving and careful person, sir.'

"'That's very true,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'but the person I have in my eye' here he looked very hard at Mrs. Bardell) 'I think possesses these qualities, and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpness, Mrs. Bardell, which may be of material use to me.'

"'La, Mr. Pickwick!' said Mrs. Bardell, the crimson rising to her cap-border again.

"'I do,' said Mr. Pickwick, growing energetic, as was his wont in speaking of a subject which interested him,—'I do, indeed; and, to tell you the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind.'

"'Dear me, sir!' exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

"'You'll think it not very strange now,' said the amiable Mr. Pickwick, with a good-humored glance at his companion, 'that I never consulted you about this matter, and never mentioned it till I sent your little boy out this morning—eh.'"

Mrs. Bardell could only reply by a look. She had long worshiped Mr. Pickwick at a distance; but here she was all at once raised to a pinnacle to which her wildest and most extravagant hopes had never dared to aspire. Mr. Pickwick was going to propose,—a deliberate plan too: he had sent her little boy away!

After a few words more Mrs. Bardell, overcome by her feelings, went into ecstatic hysterics, and threw herself into the arms of Mr. Pickwick, who vehemently protested, and begged her to desist.

"'Mrs. Bardell, my good woman—dear me, what a situation! Pray consider, Mrs. Bardell; don't—if anybody should come—'

"'Oh! let them come,' exclaimed Mrs. Bardell frantically. 'I'll never leave you—dear, kind, good soul!' And with these words Mrs. Bardell clung the tighter.

"'Mercy upon me!' said Mr. Pickwick, struggling violently. 'I hear somebody coming up the stairs. Don't, don't, there's a good creature, don't!' But entreaty and remonstrance were alike unavailing; for Mrs. Bardell had fainted in Mr. Pickwick's arms; and, before he could gain time to deposit her on a chair, Master Bardell entered the room, ushering in Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass."

Finally, after a prolonged lawsuit, Mr. Pickwick succeeded in escaping the clutches of this ardent lady.

One of the scenes that Frederick Barnard has illustrated is told by Dickens as follows:

"An old oak afforded a pleasant shelter to the group, and a rich prospect of arable and meadow land, intersected with luxuriant hedges, and richly ornamented with wood, lay spread out below them.

"'This is delightful—thoroughly delightful!' said Mr. Pickwick, the skin of whose expressive countenance was rapidly peeling off, with exposure to the sun.

"'So it is: so it is, old fellow,' replied Wardle. 'Come; a glass of punch!'

"'With great pleasure,' said Mr. Pickwick, the satisfaction of whose countenance, after drinking it, bore testimony to the sincerity of the reply."

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MR. PECKSNIFF, BY FREDERICK BARNARD

MR. PECKSNIFF, the famous "moral" hypocrite in "Martin Chuzzlewit," from the drawing by Frederick Barnard, is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Charles Dickens."

MR. PECKSNIFF

Monograph Number Four in The Mentor Reading Course

MR. PECKSNIFF was a moral man apparently; but in fact he was a precious old hypocrite.

He was a resident of Salisbury, in England, and was supposed to be an architect and land surveyor; though he never built anything, and his surveying was limited to the view from the windows of his own house. He also taught school; but he was not much of a teacher.

He was a sort of cousin of old Martin Chuzzlewit, grandfather of the hero of the book "Martin Chuzzlewit," and he hoped to inherit some of the old man's money when he died. Dickens describes him as follows:

"His very throat was moral. You saw a good deal of it. You looked over a very low fence of white cravat (whereof no man had ever beheld the tie, for he fastened it behind), and there it lay, a valley between two jutting heights of collar, serene and whiskerless before you. It seemed to say on the part of Mr. Pecksniff, 'There is no deception, ladies and gentlemen; all is peace; a holy calm pervades me.' So did his person, which was sleek, though free from corpulency. So did his manner, which was soft and oily. In a word, even his plain black suit, and state of widower, and dangling double eyeglass, all tended to the same purpose, and cried aloud, 'Behold the moral Pecksniff!'"

Mr. Pecksniff received young Martin Chuzzlewit as a student; but threw him out of the house when the young man's grandfather ordered him to. This he did in order to secure the old man's great wealth; and he very carefully studied his likes and dislikes and also tried to worm himself into his favor. But in the end he found that all his labor had been in vain; for old Martin discovered his real character and took his grandson again into his favor.

Mr. Pecksniff remained the hypocrite even in shame and discovery, and ended his days in dissipation and beggary.

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MR. MICAWBER, BY FREDERICK BARNARD

MR. MICAWBER, a shabby but pompous character in "David Copperfield," from the drawing by Frederick Barnard, is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Charles Dickens."

MR. MICAWBER

Monograph Number Five in The Mentor Reading Course

WHILE David Copperfield was drudging away in the warehouse of Murdstone & Grinby he lodged with Mr. Wilkins Micawber. Mr. Micawber was insistently a gentleman. "His clothes were shabby, but he had an imposing shirt-collar on. He carried a jaunty sort of stick, with a large pair of rusty tassels to it, and quizzing-glasses hung outside his coat." His spirits were alternately in the clouds or in the depths. He loved to write grandiloquent letters and to make speeches; but most of all he was noted for waiting for something to turn up.

This is the way he is introduced upon the scene (David Copperfield is speaking):

"The counting-house clock was at half-past twelve, and there was general preparation for going to dinner, when Mr. Quinion tapped at the counting-house window, and beckoned me to go in. I went in, and found there a stoutish, middle-aged person, in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes, with no more hair upon his head (which was a large one, and very shining), than there is upon an egg, and with a very extensive face, which he turned full upon me....

"'This,' said Mr. Quinion, in allusion to myself, 'is he.'

"'This,' said the stranger, with a certain condescending roll in his voice, and a certain indescribable air of doing something genteel, which impressed me very much, 'is Master Copperfield. I hope I see you well, sir?'

"I said I was well, and hoped he was. I was sufficiently ill at ease, Heaven knows; but it was not in my nature to complain much at that time of my life; so I said I was very well, and hoped he was.

"'I am,' said the stranger, 'thank Heaven! quite well. I have received a letter from Mr. Murdstone, in which he mentions that he would desire me to receive into an apartment in the rear of my house, which is at present unoccupied, and is, in short, to be let as a—in short,' said the stranger, with a smile, and in a burst of confidence,—'as a bedroom, the young beginner whom I have now the pleasure to—'and the stranger waved his hand, and settled his chin in his shirt-collar.

"'This is Mr. Micawber,' said Mr. Quinion to me.

"'Ahem!' said the stranger: 'that is my name.'

"'Mr. Micawber,' said Mr. Quinion, 'is known to Mr. Murdstone. He takes orders for us on commission when he can get any. He has been written to by Mr. Murdstone on the subject of your lodgings, and he will receive you as a lodger.'"

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BILL SIKES, BY FREDERICK BARNARD

BILL SIKES, the viciously brutal and cold-blooded thief in "Oliver Twist," from the drawing by Frederick Barnard, is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Charles Dickens."

BILL SIKES

Monograph Number Six in The Mentor Reading Course

BILL SIKES was a brutal villain, with no gleam of light in all the blackness of his character. He first appears on the scene in "Oliver Twist" during a squabble between Fagin, the teacher of pickpockets, and two of his pupils, the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates. As usual, he was accompanied by his dog, which he ill treated continually, but which was neverthleess devoted to his master.

Dickens gives a picture of Sikes and his dog as follows:

"In the obscure parlour of a low public house, in the filthiest part of Little Saffron Hill, a dark and gloomy den, where a flaring gas-light burnt all day in the wintertime, and where no ray of sun ever shone in the summer, there sat, brooding over a little pewter measure and a small glass, strongly impregnated with the smell of liquor, a man in a velveteen coat, drab shorts, half boots, and stockings, whom even by that dim light no experienced agent of police would have hesitated to recognize as Mr. William Sikes. At his feet sat a white-coated, red-eyed dog, who occupied himself alternately with winking at his master with both eyes at the same time, and in licking a large, fresh cut on one side of his mouth, which appeared to be the result of some recent conflict.

"'Keep quiet, you warmint! keep quiet!' said Mr. Sikes, suddenly breaking silence. Whether his meditations were so intense as to be disturbed by the dog's winking, or whether his feelings were so wrought upon by his reflections that they required all the relief derivable from kicking an unoffending animal to allay them, is matter for argument and consideration. Whatever was the cause, the effect was a kick and a curse bestowed upon the dog simultaneously.

"Dogs are not generally apt to revenge injuries inflicted upon them by their masters; but Mr. Sikes's dog, having faults of temper in common with his owner, and labouring, perhaps, at this moment, under a powerful sense of injury, made no more ado, but at one fixed his teeth in one of the half boots. Having given it a hearty shake, he retired, growling, under a form, just escaping the pewter measure which Mr. Sikes levelled at his head."

Bill Sikes murdered Nancy, his companion, in revenge for her having betrayed the rest of the gang in order to save Oliver Twist from them. He was pursued and nearly captured. In trying to lower himself from a roof the rope tangled itself about his neck and he died. His faithful dog followed him over, and dashed his brains out upon the stones below.

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